

# National Veterans Wheelchair Games



## Athlete Profile

### Gus Sorenson – Hoping for Good Weather

The 27<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games, June 19-23 in Milwaukee, will be close to home for Gustave “Gus” Sorenson, a 59-year-old Army veteran from Sturtevant, Wisconsin. He is signed up to compete in table tennis, quad rugby, bowling and field events (discus and shot-put) at the event this year.



Sorenson served in the U.S. Army from May 1968 through February 1970. He is a combat veteran of Vietnam, where he served in mechanized infantry. He also served in the infantry while stationed in Panama. Sixteen days after his honorable discharge, Sorenson sustained a spinal cord injury in an automobile accident that left him a quadriplegic.

“You learn how precious every day is after an injury,” Sorenson says. “You learn to appreciate the value of life as well. While hospitalized at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center, I was so appreciative of all the groups that came around to provide activities and support, demonstrating to the hospitalized veterans that they really care about them. I have met so many amazing people who have gone out of their way to help.”

Having participated in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games approximately 20 times, Sorenson is well aware of the benefits the event provides to the participants. “Everyone has choices – you can sit at home or you can go out and try. It’s great to see a big smile by a participant when they realize they can compete.”

“I’m hoping for good weather for the Games,” Sorenson says. “I’m anxious for people to see all that Milwaukee and southeast Wisconsin have to offer. There are great people working on the Games, which have received an overwhelming response from individuals, organizations and businesses. For the athletes it will definitely be a trip to remember, and I know people will turn out in droves to show their support.”

Sorenson has a degree in history from the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. As government relations director for the Wisconsin Paralyzed Veterans of America, his primary focus is monitoring legislation that affects veterans and advocating for individuals with physical disabilities. He is also involved in several other assignments such as writing grants, preparing newsletter material and fund raising. He often speaks to school classes and professional groups on what it means to be a veteran and what it’s like to live with a disability.

This past year, Gus Sorenson has also helped in the planning of the 2007 Games on behalf of the local PVA Chapter. “The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are a great motivator for me and they keep me active. I always look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones at the Games, and I enjoy the genuine warmth of the volunteers and the host city. Participating keeps my batteries charged for the whole year.”